



15 day Coastal Explorer

Starting in Queenstown, the adventure capital, spend some time relaxing or enjoying the many wonderful activities here. A full day trip to Doubtful Sound including a Wilderness Cruise is included. Head north to the wild West Coast and the unique glacier region before crossing the Southern Alps to the Pacific Ocean and its abundance of wildlife at Kaikoura. A day to sample the fine produce of Marlborough before heading into Abel Tasman National Park, famous for its golden sand beaches, great walking tracks and kayaking. Complete the coastal loop by exploring the history rich north west coastline from Westport to Greymouth before taking the Tranz Alpine train across the Alps and into Christchurch.

Starts in: Queenstown
 Finishes in: Christchurch
 Length: 15days / 14nights
 Accommodation: Motels
 Can be customised: Yes

This itinerary can be customised to suit you perfectly. We can add more days, remove days, change accommodations, mix it up, add activities to suit your interests or simply design and create something from scratch. Call us today to get your custom New Zealand itinerary underway.



Inclusions:

- Includes: Late model rental cars
- Includes: Fully inclusive rental car insurance (excess may apply)
- Includes: Unlimited kms
- Includes: Afterhours emergency support while touring
- Included activity: Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation
- Included activity: Electronic Travel Guide and In-Country Support App
- Included activity: The Visitor Promise - Cultural Learning Course
- Included activity: TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch
- Included activity: Shared Transfer from Christchurch Train Station to Christchurch CBD
- Accommodation with Christchurch Touring Company
- Included activity: Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company
- Included activity: Doubtful Sound Wilderness Cruise from Queenstown with RealNZ

Day 1



Private Transfer Queenstown Airport to your Accommodation

On arrival you will be met by a private driver and delivered to your Queenstown accommodation.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Gondola and 3 Luge Rides with Skyline Queenstown

In the heart of Queenstown, located 450 metres above town in the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve is the Skyline Complex. A gondola ride to the summit makes for awe-inspiring views of the city surround. Arrive at the complex and wander the outside viewing decks for a picture perfect outlook. Then onto the Luge! The 800 metre luge track offers an exhilarating journey through banked corners, tunnels and dippers.

Your accommodation: Scenic Suites Queenstown

Scenic Suites Queenstown offers guests exquisite style and comfort, with a selection of rooms having spectacular views over Lake Wakatipu and the Southern Alps. The hotel prides itself on its 4-star hospitality that will make your stay in Queenstown even more memorable.



Day 2



Explore Queenstown

Well-known as New Zealand's 'adventure capital', Queenstown is home to a range of adventures, from the world's first and most famous bungy jumps to jet boat thrills, white-water rafting, and skydiving. However, Queenstown offers far more than a fast-paced, action-packed holiday. Settled on the shores of beautiful Lake Wakatipu beneath a soaring panorama of the Remarkables Mountain Range, this alpine town is surrounded by many historic, gastronomic, and scenic wonders. Take a stroll through the beautiful lakefront parks and gardens, browse through market stalls on weekends, dine in wonderful al-fresco restaurants, or ride on the 100-year-old historic Steamship - TSS Earnslaw to Walter Peak Station. Take the Queenstown Gondola up to Bob's Peak and soak up the panoramic views of the magnificent lake and mountain ranges. And after all of that, if you do want the adrenaline rush, Queenstown is known for taking your pick from the Shotover Jet, Canyon Swing, Zipline, Luge, or Heli-hike.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shotover Jet Canyon Jet Boat Ride

Shotover Jet is the only company permitted to operate in the Shotover River Canyons. It's a thrilling ride! Skim past rocky outcrops at close range in your Shotover Jet 'Big Red', as you twist and turn through the narrow canyons at breathtaking speeds. And a major highlight - hold tight for the world-famous Shotover Jet full 360-degree spins! It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Appellation Boutique Wine Tour

Experience a tasting journey through three of Central Otago's incredibly scenic and varying wine sub-regions; Gibbston, Bannockburn and Cromwell. Visit three boutique vineyards, tasting their unique cool climate wines and discover why the Central Otago region has become world-renowned in its own right. Indulge at a fourth vineyard restaurant for a platter-style lunch, savouring the finest and freshest produce, accompanied with a wine flight.

There will also be an opportunity to retrace history when you stroll through the charming historical settlement of Old Cromwell.

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Day 3



Doubtful Sound Wilderness Cruise from Queenstown with RealNZ

Journey aboard a luxury glass-roofed coach from Queenstown, travelling along Lake Wakatipu and the scenic countryside to Manapouri. From Pearl Harbour, enjoy a cruise across serene Lake Manapouri to West Arm, followed by a coach ride over the rainforest-clad Wilmot Pass with stops to admire the lush plant life and breathtaking views. At Pātea-Doubtful Sound, board the catamaran Commander Peak for a 3-hour cruise to the Tasman Sea, showcasing waterfalls, rainforests, and majestic mountains. Keep an eye out for fur seals, bottlenose dolphins, and seasonal Fiordland crested penguins. Enjoy insightful commentary and experience the tranquil "Sound of Silence" on the return trip.

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Day 4



Collect Rental Car

This tour's from price includes an intermediate-sized vehicle, setting you up for comfortable travels. Yet, we understand every adventure is unique! Feel free to select the perfect wheels from our incredible collection of rental cars, spanning from economy hatchbacks to premium SUVs.

Queenstown to Franz Josef Glacier via Wānaka

From Queenstown you'll cross the Crown Range, the highest sealed road in New Zealand to arrive in the Alpine town of Wānaka, gateway to Mt Aspiring National Park. Skirting the shores of both Lake Wanaka and Hawea, you will enter the small town of Makarora. Stop at Blue Pools for a 1-hour return walk through the native beech forest to a glacier-fed swimming hole. Continue on through the remote seaside settlement of Haast before heading up the wild West Coast highway you pass through ancient temperate rainforests while getting sneak peeks of the wild coast beaches occasionally. Keep heading North and be sure to enjoy the view of the ever-changing towering snowcapped Southern Alps Mountain Range. Fox Glacier welcomes you first, then comes your destination for the night Franz Josef township.

Your accommodation: Punga Grove Motel & Suites

Punga Grove is right in the heart of Franz Josef Glacier village stylish accommodation in a beautiful rainforest setting.



Day 5



Explore Franz Josef

Franz Josef is a small yet lively town in the heart of New Zealand's West Coast, best known for its spectacular 12 km-long glacier. The township is surrounded by lush, rainforest-clad mountains and has a vibrant atmosphere with plenty to explore. A variety of scenic walking trails offer incredible views of the glacier, but for a truly up-close experience, a licensed helicopter tour is the only way to set foot on the ice. Beyond the glacier, unwind in the rejuvenating Hot Pools or visit the West Coast Wildlife Centre to spot rare kiwi birds. If you're in the mood for a more relaxed day, the township is home to charming souvenir and gift shops, as well as great dining spots like SnakeBite Brewery and King Tiger. Whether you're chasing adventure or relaxation, Franz Josef is a stunning blend of wild beauty and welcoming hospitality.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Franz Josef Glacier Helihike with Franz Josef Glacier Guides

After a thrilling scenic flight, high above the rugged terrain, you will land on the glacier, ready to undertake a guided glacier hike. Your friendly guide will lead you through some of the most pristine and awe-inspiring glacial scenery in the world. Your guide will choose your route carefully as you go and, with an eye for the most spectacular ice formations, you'll soon be making your way through an extraordinary landscape of towering peaks and glistening blue ice. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity prior to travel. For more information please see here.

Your accommodation: Punga Grove Motel & Suites

Punga Grove is right in the heart of Franz Josef Glacier village stylish accommodation in a beautiful rainforest setting.



Day 6



Franz Josef to Punakaiki

Driving north on State Highway 6, you pass through many small West Coast towns. Hari Hari is the township that Guy Menzies decided to land in (or rather crash land) as he became the first person to fly solo across the Tasman. Ross is the site of an old gold mining town, and some of the old buildings remain. You can even pan for gold. The craft and gift stores in Hokitika are excellent, with a great range of locally made items, and if you want to explore further here then the Hokitika Gorge is worthy of a 50-minute detour.

Just south of Greymouth is Shantytown, a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear. Be sure to stop at the supermarket in Greymouth as there is none in Punakaiki. Punakaiki is a highlight of this drive, so allow plenty of time to walk the paths and explore the Pancake Rocks.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Glowworm Cave Tour with Underworld Adventures

Delve into an ancient wonderland of stalactites, stalagmites and glowworms in the enormous Nile River Caves. At the Charleston Base you'll be equipped with caving helmets, coats and boots and taken to the Nile River Rainforest Train where you'll travel through the forest before exploring the dry upper levels of the Aranui Entrance series. Recently discovered, the Metro cave is one of only several caves in the world left in a natural unspoilt state. Exploring the lower level of the cave system, in the dark you will find galaxies of glow worms spanning over you. Your guides will enrich your journey with captivating illustrations, explanations and stories connecting you with this special place. After emerging back to the daylight a short stroll leads back to the train. It is important you understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Underworld Rafting and Glowworm Experience with Underworld Adventures

A superb four hour Black Water Rafting adventure in the Paparoa National Park. You meander through a paradise of stalactites and stalagmites in the upper dry levels of the cave. You then enter a slow moving underground river on which you float in your tube using only the natural light of an awe inspiring display of glow worms for navigation. Emerge from the cave into a remote and untouched world before leaving its tranquility for the rushing bubbling waters of the low grade Nile River Rapids. It is important you understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information please see here.

Your accommodation: Punakaiki Treehouse

The Punakaiki Treehouse is situated in 3 hectares of NZ native bush and is located 3.2km North of the Punakaiki Pancake rocks.



Day 7



Punakaiki to Arthur's Pass National Park

Today you'll head south towards Greymouth, before turning onto State Highway 73 as you make your way to Arthur's Pass. Winding your way up and over the Southern Alps, this route takes you through some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, even in the rain when hundreds of waterfalls cascade down the bush clad hillsides.

Originally the road was used as a pass by the Maori as they made their seasonal passage to collect Greenstone in the West Coast mountains. Following the 1800's gold rush a road and railway was developed through the area. Today, the railway is used predominantly for the world renowned TranzAlpine Scenic Train, transporting several hundred tourists per day from Christchurch to Greymouth or the other way round. Continue on through the Otira Gorge, before arriving at your destination for the night, Arthur's Pass.

Note: If you're feeling like a more leisurely drive, there is the option to take a more scenic route around Lake Brunner. Well signposted, this road begins just before the town of Kumara.

Walking tracks in Arthurs Pass National Park

Within Arthur's Pass there are many short walks to suit all ages and abilities. Located in the Arthur's Pass Village is a Department of Conservation information centre where you can get updates on track conditions and track suitability as well as learn about the natural history of the area and its people.

Listed below is a selection of short walks.

1. Millennium Walk - Time: 10 minutes return
2. Devils Punchbowl Waterfall Walk - Time: One hour return
3. Arthur's Pass Walking Track - Time: One hour 20 minutes (one way)
4. Dobson Nature Walk - Time: 30 minutes return
5. Old Coach Road Walk - Time: 30 minutes return
6. Cockayne Nature Walk - Time: 30 minutes return

Your accommodation: Arthurs Pass Alpine Motel

Located in the main part of Arthur's Pass, this is the ideal location to enjoy and explore Arthur's Pass National Park. Close to cafes and the visitor centre, your accommodation is in comfortable, self-contained units.



Day 8



Arthur's Pass to Kaikoura

Travelling from the Southern Alps to the Coast, this drive offers spectacular views of braided river valleys. You'll travel through Castle Hill Scenic Reserve, dotted with remarkable rocky outcrops, popular for hiking.

Descending onto the Canterbury Plains, you'll travel through the rich farmland surrounding Christchurch before turning North through the small towns of Rangiora and Oxford. You'll then travel on State Highway 1 through the Waipara Valley. If you have plenty of time be sure to stop at Hanmer Springs for a soak in the hot mineral pools.

The road hugs the coast for the final stretch of this drive, before arriving at your destination, Kaikoura. Keep a lookout for dolphins as they are often seen swimming just off the coastline as well as New Zealand fur seals basking by the roadside.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Ocean's Cabin with Whale Watch Kaikōura

Experience New Zealand's only marine-based whale-watching company. Whale Watch Kaikōura offers a once-in-a-lifetime, up-close encounter with the giant Sperm Whale. You are also likely to encounter New Zealand fur seals, dolphins, and albatross. Depending on the season you may also see Pilot, Blue, and Southern Right whales as well as migrating humpbacks. Often orcas can be spotted here and the world's smallest dolphin, the Hector's, occasionally makes an appearance.

Your accommodation: The White Morph, Kaikōura

Set on the Esplanade in Kaikōura, The White Morph enjoys commanding views of the ocean and mountains. Just a 10-minute walk into town, The White Morph has been beautifully placed so that you can take in the spectacular scenery of Kaikoura while enjoying the variety of attractions on offer.



Day 9



Kaikoura to Blenheim

Heading north from Kaikoura, the road hugs the shore for approximately 50 kilometres and offers many opportunities to view the native wildlife such as seabirds and New Zealand fur seals. One of the best seal watching locations is Ohau Point (25km north of Kaikoura), where you can observe the adults on the shoreline and the pups frolicking in the waterfall, just a short walk from the road (signposted). As you drive you will have turquoise waters of the South Pacific Ocean to your east and to the west the towering Kaikoura Ranges. Crossing the dry hills of the Marlborough ranges you head towards Marlborough, New Zealand's largest wine producing region. Blenheim sits right at the heart of Marlborough and is ideally located to enjoy an afternoon sampling the local produce. A great way to do this is to take a guided wine tour with Sounds Connection Wine Tours.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Half Day Marlborough Wine Tour with Sounds Connection

An afternoon among the vines! Be immersed in the Marlborough wine country with the Sounds Connection half day wine tour. Get collected from your accommodation and taken through three or four hand-picked wineries to taste the award-winning produce this region is known for. Hear about the history of winemaking in Marlborough as well as learning the unique processes each winery goes through.

Your accommodation: Blenheim Palms Motel

Located 100 m from the central shops and eateries, the Blenheim Palms Motel offers tasteful individually designed apartment-styled rooms.



Day 10



Blenheim to Abel Tasman National Park via Queen Charlotte Drive

Take a short drive to the small port of Picton where the Interislander ferry connects with Wellington. A bustling seaside destination, Picton is well equipped with shops, cafes and is also the starting point for the famous Queen Charlotte Walk. You'll travel along Queen Charlotte Drive, traversing the length of the Marlborough Sounds coastline. Magnificent views are abundant so be sure to make time to stop and enjoy the scenery as you go.

Continue through the small port town of Havelock, home to a variety of cafes and restaurants. The highway between Nelson and Picton crosses the pelorus river, and at this junction you'll find the famous pelorus bridge. From here there are a number of forest walks, the most popular a 30 minute loop through beech, rimu, and totara forest. Traverse Tasman Bay passing through Motueka to arrive on the outskirts of Abel Tasman National Park.

Your accommodation: Ocean View Chalets

The Ocean View Chalets are situated on a 50-acre farmlet, slightly elevated and nestled along the bush line with panoramic sea views. Great access the National Park and close to the friendly Marahau village.



Day 11



Abel Tasman National Park

Experience the golden beauty of Abel Tasman National Park, a coastal paradise renowned for its spectacular hiking track, pristine golden beaches, secluded inlets, and private lagoons. With its mild climate and stunning natural environment, it's a cherished destination for New Zealanders nationwide. Why not enjoy a scenic cruise through the Sounds or take a kayaking tour around its many sheltered bays? Relax to the melodious birdsong and get up close to some of the park's many animal residents, including native bats, geckos, birds, marine mammals, fur seals, and dolphins.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Beaches, Bays and Seals Guided Sea Kayaking Trip with Wilsons - Lunch Included

This adventure combines Abel Tasman's stunning beaches, coastal walks, and wildlife. Starting with a Vista Cruise to Torrent Bay, you'll enjoy kayaking, a picnic lunch, and the chance to spot seals and penguins. Return via boat and, in summer, opt for an unguided walk through the beautiful Torrent Bay Lagoon and Cleopatra's Pool. After a refreshing shower at the lodge, you'll cruise back to Kaiteriteri. This tour offers a mix of nature, adventure, and relaxation. It is important you read and understand the risks associated with this activity. For more information see here.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Abel Tasman National Park Cruise and Walk Open Day Pass

Explore Abel Tasman National Park through scenic cruises and short bush walks. Options include the Vista Scenic Cruise with stops at golden beaches and the Tonga Island Seal Colony, the Pitt Head Loop offering leisurely trails and beach relaxation, or the Seals and Beach adventure combining marine reserve views and a forested hike. Other highlights include the Bark Bay Falls walk and the Swing Bridge, Bush and Beach experience with lush forest trails and Cleopatra's Pool. Each trip combines stunning coastal scenery with immersive nature experiences.

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Your accommodation: Ocean View Chalets

The Ocean View Chalets are situated on a 50-acre farmlet, slightly elevated and nestled along the bush line with panoramic sea views. Great access the National Park and close to the friendly Marahau village.



Day 12



Marahau to Westport

Today travel along the Buller Gorge home to spectacular scenery. Head through the sleepy town of Murchison, a great place to stop for lunch then continue on to Inangahua, the first major town in the region. You'll then come to Whites Creek - where New Zealand's longest swing bridge is located. As you cross the river take in the magnificent views of the gorge before drive a short way further to arrive in Westport, the largest town the Northern West Coast.

Your accommodation: Buller Bridge Motel

Ideally located in Westport this well equipped motel is adjacent to the Buller River and Millennium Walkway but also just a few minutes walk from the town centre



Day 13



Westport to Greymouth

Cape Foulwind just south of Westport is home to a seal colony and the short walk provides some spectacular scenery. The spectacular West Coast coastline guides you to Paparoa National Park and to Punakaiki. A stop at the pancake rocks is a highlight of this drive so allow plenty of time to walk the paths and explore the formations.

Greymouth sits on the Grey River almost at the western end of State Highway 73. It's the largest town on the coast and as such is the commercial centre. A fine small town centre with some interesting buildings makes it a pleasant place to stroll or if you are feeling a little more adventurous then there is almost every activity you can think of available here. In the centre of town you will also find the Monteith's brewery and a tour is highly worthwhile. Greymouth is also where the TranzAlpine train arrives and departs. Just south of Greymouth is Shantytown a replica gold rush town with lots of great displays from yesteryear.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY - Shantytown Heritage Park Experience

Shantytown is a faithfully restored replica of an 1860's West Coast gold mining town. It is a living monument to the hardy pioneers who forded the wildly exotic rivers and streams and scrambled through the rugged subtropical rainforest in search of their fortunes. A 20 minute ride on one of the original bush steam trains takes you deep into gold country. Among the collection of pioneer relics and Kiwiana that has come to comprise Shantytown's unique and valuable collection are some true gems. This vast and significant collection is housed in over 30 historic buildings, enabling you to wander your way through the town as interlopers into a bygone era. You'll also get to try your hand at gold-panning under the helpful tuition of the highly experienced gold claim staff.

Your accommodation: Bella Vista Greymouth

Experience true West Coast hospitality at Bella Vista Greymouth. A great base for all your West Coast adventures. Enjoy the convenience of being located in close proximity to the town centre for shops, entertainment and other activities.



Day 14



TranzAlpine Scenic Train: Greymouth to Christchurch

Considered one of the world's great train journeys, the TranzAlpine Scenic Train takes you from Greymouth to Christchurch. Travel across the South Island from the west to the east coast through Arthur's Pass National Park. From the comfort of your carriage see lush beech forest, deep river valleys and the spectacular peaks of the Southern Alps. Descend to the windswept Canterbury Plains before arriving in the city of Christchurch.

Shared Transfer from Christchurch Train Station to Christchurch CBD Accommodation with Christchurch Touring Company

On arrival at the Christchurch railway station, you will be met by a driver and transferred to your Christchurch accommodation.

Your accommodation: Quest on Cambridge

Quest on Cambridge serviced apartment-style hotel rooms offer guests a relaxed and comfortable Christchurch accommodation experience. Each room has an open-plan living area, a fully equipped kitchen, and natural light. Quest on Cambridge is a short walk from the south shopping centre and to the Botanic Gardens.



Day 15



Private Transfer from Accommodation to Airport with Christchurch Touring Company

Enjoy a seamless, private transfer from your Christchurch city accommodation directly to the Christchurch Airport in time for your departing flight.

Farewell from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Bid farewell to Aotearoa / New Zealand, taking with you unforgettable memories of its breathtaking landscapes and incredible adventures. In Māori, it is said mā te wā, which is not goodbye, it is see you soon!

Tour details

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Departures: | Daily |
| Tour type: | South Island Self Drive |
| Starts: | Queenstown |
| Finishes: | Christchurch |
| Tour length: | 15 |
| Accommodation: | Motels |
| Car/transport type: | |

Accommodation summary

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|--------|----------------------------|
| Day 1 | Scenic Suites Queenstown |
| Day 2 | Scenic Suites Queenstown |
| Day 3 | Scenic Suites Queenstown |
| Day 4 | Punga Grove Motel & Suites |
| Day 5 | Punga Grove Motel & Suites |
| Day 6 | Punakaiki Treehouse |
| Day 7 | Arthurs Pass Alpine Motel |
| Day 8 | The White Morph, Kaikōura |
| Day 9 | Blenheim Palms Motel |
| Day 10 | Ocean View Chalets |
| Day 11 | Ocean View Chalets |
| Day 12 | Buller Bridge Motel |
| Day 13 | Bella Vista Greymouth |
| Day 14 | Quest on Cambridge |